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CZECH SOCIOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Czech society offers rich sociological material. Need of social theory became conscious in the last part of the nineteenth century. Czech philosophy was long influenced by German thought, then by Hume, Comte, and Spencer, introduced by Masaryk. He later impressed his social theories upon the movement for Czech independence. Translations from other literatures: Chalupný, Beneš, Foustka.

It is natural that the history of Czech Society, in which all the important periods of the history of Czech countries have been reflected, offers rich material for studies on the manners in which the national idea developed under all these different conditions.

At the time when the Czech nation became conscious of its existence, and its literature had begun to emerge from the mist of romanticism toward correct scientific knowledge, the need of forming a theory about the many various expressions of domestic life was felt. The characteristic sign of the second half of the nineteenth century is just this search for a theoretical basis.

Czech philosophy was, for a long time, influenced by the German philosophical system, because there was domestic tradition existing from modern times on which it could lean. But neither the intellectualism of Hegel nor the empiricism of Herbart was able to serve as basis for the understanding of the Czech spirit, the characteristic sign of it is that every theoretical problem very soon becomes a question of practice.

A wholesome influence on Czech philosophy came from the West with the names Hume, Comte, and Spencer, to whom public attention was drawn by the writings of Professor Masaryk, the present president of the Czechoslovak Republic.

In order to harmonize the scientific knowledge of the Czech spirit, Masaryk treated in his work, entitled *Concrete Logic*, the classification of sciences and their mutual relations. This book was

at the same time the first Czech scientific sociological work; it was soon followed by special studies of this science, among which *The Social Problem*, is deserving of mention because it proves that Masaryk very soon turned from abstract theories to concrete cases in social life. In some other works, *The Czech Problem, Our Crisis, John Huss, Charles Havlíček*, he explained the historical and social meaning of Czech history and established as an ideal for the individual as well as for the whole of society scientific character, freedom of thinking, and morality in action. Masaryk studied the domestic conditions of the Russians as well as of the Czechs and pronounced his opinion on the Russian problem in his work *Russia and Europe*, translated also into English, which was published just at the time when Russia began to attract the attention of the whole world.

It is not necessary to enlarge upon how Masaryk, during the war, by his deep scientific work, raised the question of Czech independence to a problem of vital interest for all Europe and by what success this activity was attended. He united harmonically in his person, theory and deep social feeling with an energetic activity in practice.

Under the direct or indirect influence of Masaryk a number of translations of prominent sociological works were introduced into Czech literature and literary papers began to give much attention to social problems. The same influence caused the young generation of writers during the last ten years of the nineteenth century to take a large part in the social movement and to turn from purely expressive methods toward the study of the working of social forces on the fate of the individual.

Among Masaryk's pupils was Emanuel Chalupný who gave to Czech literature its first genuine systematic sociological treatise, entitled *Sociology*, a work of fifteen volumes.

Another pupil of Masaryk's and his well-known collaborator in the achievement of Czech independence is Dr. Edward Beneš who studied, besides other problems, the ideology of Czech political parties and in a work entitled *Partiality*, which discusses from a critical point of view the different theories of the foundation of parties, seeking the general principles of their development, their

mutual relations and organization. He wrote also on this subject a study published in the December issue (1919) of the *Revue Internationale de Sociologie*.

Among specialists treating special sociological problems and deserving of foremost mention is Professor B. Foustka, author of a work entitled *The Weak Members of Human Society*, by which he gave a strong impulse toward the care of children and aroused interest in labor problems.

At the present time, the interest in sociological studies has come much to the front and there is already a considerable number of specialists studying the auxiliary disciplines of sociology, as, for instance, anthropology, social pathology, eugenics, etc.